

BRAC IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY – JUNE 17, 2008

- John Carman called the Committee to order at 7:35 p.m.
- Phil Alperson provided the following updates:
 - A meeting was held last week at WMATA headquarters to initiate discussions about specific plans for the proposed east-side access to the Medical Center Metro station at Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355). Representatives from WMATA, MDOT and the Maryland Transit Administration, NNMC, DPWT, and Phil attended. Until now, discussions about the project have focused on generic rather than site-specific designs. Issues discussed included:
 - Possible design alternatives, including:
 - An east-side bank of high speed elevators approx. 100' down to a tunnel to the Metro platform
 - Elevators on both sides of MD 355 approx. 25' down to a mid-level platform. This would be more convenient for pedestrians who do not need Metro access but need safe passage to cross beneath MD 355.
 - A pedestrian tunnel unrelated to the Metro access. This study would determine whether this passage could be constructed without elevators and whether it could be constructed in conjunction with Metro-access projects listed above.
 - A pedestrian overpass, which would require elevators.
 - A no-build option with pedestrian safety improvements.
 - A Purpose and Needs statement for this project:
 - Enhanced Metro access would encourage greater transit use and reduce vehicular traffic.
 - A pedestrian underpass or overpass would improve vehicular flow along MD 355.
 - A pedestrian underpass or overpass would promote pedestrian safety.
 - Who would be responsible for constructing and maintaining the project?
 - Metrorail and bus ridership and feasibility analyses must be conducted.
 - This project must incorporate currently undetermined NNMC transportation management plans.
 - How will other potential long-range plans, such as potential widening of MD 355 or addition or turn lanes, affect this project?
 - Phil reported on some improvements to the BRAC web page: The Transportation Page leads off with a summary and status report of all BRAC-related transportation projects, and a new Business and Workforce Opportunities Page has been added

- Phil noted that the National Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury, for which ground was recently broken, is a private project subsidized by the Fisher House Foundation. Because it is not a federal government project, subcontracts were not required to be open to competitive bidding and have been awarded. The same will apply to the new Fisher Houses on campus. However, business and employment opportunities may still be available with these projects, and that information is posted on the new Opportunities Page on the web site.
- Ollie Oliveria and Jeff Miller provided updates from NNMC:
 - Ollie discussed the new BRAC Construction Hotline -- (301) 319-BRAC (2722). The line will be posted on the NNMC web site and is intended to allow the community to contact NNMC and express concerns about day-to-day issues related to construction. This would include concerns for safety, noise, and other factors that might negatively impact the quality of life for those who live and work near the campus. The phone will be staffed weekdays between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM with an answering machine taking the calls at off-hours. The answering machine will give instructions on how to contact NNMC for any emergent issues occurring during the time the phone is not staffed. NNMC wants to ensure that a "real person" is available to answer the phone during the hours the contractor will be doing the bulk of the work so the hours may be adjusted once construction begins. The individual answering the phone will record information from the caller and then forward the information to the appropriate person for resolution. Return calls will only be made if additional information is needed to resolve the issue raised during the initial call. Concerns were expressed that some complaints registered on weekends may not receive timely attention. The matter of construction parking in neighborhoods was raised. The prime contractor (Clark Construction) has a contractual obligation to prevent construction parking in neighborhoods and NNMC will endeavor to enforce this. Neighbors should use the Hotline to report any problems in this regard.
 - Ollie discussed a memo received from the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDC), about the status of the Defense Access Road requests. SDDC is the DAR decision-making body. While the requests are still under review, the SDDC memo said that the request for DOD assistance in constructing turn lane improvements along MD 355 at the North Wood Gate may not qualify for DAR funding but may qualify for BRAC funding as part of the on-campus improvements at the North Wood Gate. The DAR request relating to pedestrian access at the Metro station is still being considered, and SDDC has asked the Federal Highway Administration whether coordination with local transportation officials on this project is feasible. Senators Mikulski and Cardin and Congressman Van Hollen have written to SDDC urging favorable consideration of the DAR requests.

- SDDC memo:
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/dar-sddc_reply_nnmc-061008.pdf
 - Mikulski/Cardin letter to SDDC:
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/dar-senatelettertodod-060908.pdf>
 - Van Hollen letter to SDDC:
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/dar_cvh_to_sddc-061608.doc
- Ollie announced that groundbreaking for BRAC construction will take place on June 25.
- Ollie announced that, among several personnel changes at NNMC, Admiral Jeffries is being reassigned. Admiral Matthew Nathan will become the new base commander at NNMC.
(http://www.navytimes.com/news/2008/06/navy_flagassignments_061008w/)
- Jeff Miller provided an update on BRAC-related construction and transportation challenges. The South Wood construction gate and a construction road parallel to Wood Drive will open soon. Construction traffic will enter via the new South Wood Gate and exit via the existing North Wood Gate. An additional traffic lane will be added at North Wood Gate. Construction traffic generally will use the Connecticut Avenue Beltway exit and travel west along Jones Bridge Road to access South Wood Gate. Construction traffic will be timed to avoid peak traffic hours as much as possible.
- Jeff reported that the NNMC Master Plan, which included a Transportation Management Plan, is being developed now. A draft will be submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission by the first or second week of July and will be made available to the BRAC Committee. The Plan is expected to be approved by October. MNCPPC will hold public hearings on the Master Plan, which will provide an opportunity for public input.
- Dennis Yoder of the State Highway Administration provided updates:
 - At the May BRAC Committee meeting, there was discussion about whether a “traffic order” exists that prohibits northbound left turns into the NIH truck inspection facility. In the interim, it was determined that there is no such County order. Dennis reported that there is no such state order, either.
 - The “discussion draft” of a proposed Beltway slip-ramp to the NNMC campus is still being prepared. County transportation officials reviewed a draft of the document and requested more thorough explanations on why SHA has determined that neither the ramp nor proposed alternatives are feasible.

- Dennis reported that surveying for the four intersections project continues, with data collection to be completed by the end of June or early July. Design discussions will begin after the data has been analyzed. Dennis said that SHA design professionals would come to BRAC Committee meetings to explain the process. Lengthy discussion ensued about the nature of public information and explanation being provided to local residents about the surveying. Concerns were expressed that residents do not know what to expect from this project, whether there will be major road widening (particularly along MD 355 between Cedar Lane and the Beltway) or whether they should be concerned for their property. Dennis said that until data is collected and analyzed those questions cannot be answered now. Dennis said that, although SHA had distributed letters to area residents about the project, he would try to write an explanation that responds more directly to these concerns. Dennis also noted that the \$45.3 million currently budgeted by the state to address the four major intersections will not be enough to fund the projects from beginning to completion.
- Community Update: Ilaya Hopkins reported that the Coalition of Military Medical Center Neighbors has reached out to impacted communities that are not currently represented on the BRAC Committee to ensure greater citizen involvement.
(<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/coalitionofmilmedcenterneighbors-111507.pdf>)
- John Carman said that the Park & Planning Commission will hold a hearing on Thursday, June 19 to discuss County requests for the State's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) for 2009. Park & Planning staff has recommended that the four intersections BRAC project be added to the County's list of major County-wide priorities, along with existing priorities: Corridor Cities Transitway, Purple Line, I-270 widening north of Shady Grove, and I-270/495 widening from Virginia to the I-270 West Spur.
http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2008/documents/20080619_state_trans-priority_print.pdf)

Planning staff also recommended that WMATA funding also be so considered. It was determined that the WMATA funding does not refer to the BRAC-related Metro station project but rather to WMATA funding generally. John and Phil agreed to appear before the Park and Planning Commission to testify in favor of the BRAC projects, and that Phil would draft a letter for the Committee to send to County Executive Leggett to urge that BRAC funding be a major county-wide priority for the State CTP.

- Chuck Kines of MNCPPC and Gail Tait-Nouri of DPWT gave a presentation about the proposed bike and pedestrian path improvements around NNMC. At a previous Committee meeting, Committee and audience members marked up maps of existing paths to indicate preferred enhancements. Chuck and Gail prepared a compilation of those preferences and provided updated maps. Those in attendance then had the opportunity to review and discuss their priorities based on this new map.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/exec/brac/pdf/bikeways-markup-compressed-060308.pdf>

In the next week or two, Chuck will compile a list of specific priorities based on citizen comments. That list will be the focus of Committee discussion at the July meeting, with the intention of developing a suggested plan that the County Executive could submit as an addition to the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). It was noted that currently undefined construction around NNMC gates and major intersections would make it difficult to promulgate a comprehensive pathway plan, so John Carman suggested that the Committee focus on short-term improvements that could be implemented soon, with other improvements to be submitted at a later time.

- Ken Hartman of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center reported on discussion he has had with County Executive Leggett, CAO Tim Firestine, and John Carman and Phil Alperson about how the BRAC Committee may better serve as a long-term community liaison with NNMC during and after the BRAC construction phase. He suggested that the BRAC Committee could be placed under the auspices of the Western Montgomery Citizens Advisory Board (WMCAB), which is a permanent body that provides citizen input to the County Executive on many matters, including projects to be included in the CIP. John Carman noted that, under this arrangement, government agencies currently represented on the BRAC Committee may choose to withdraw as Committee members but continue to provide BRAC-related updates, but that community and local business representatives would maintain their membership. The consensus was that the Committee would think this over and discuss this at a subsequent meeting.
- John Carman solicited comments from the audience. There were none.
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m. The next meeting is schedule for July 15th, at 7:30 p.m. at the BCC Services Center. John expressed his assumption that there may not be a meeting in August, but this remains to be determined.

Committee members in attendance, June 17, 2008:

Phil Alperson, County BRAC Coordinator

John Carman, Committee Chairman

Shahriar Etemadi, MNCPPC

Leslie Weber for Brian Gragnolati, Suburban Hospital

Ilaya Hopkins, East Bethesda Citizens Assn.

Ginanne Italiano, Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce

Janet Maalouf, Maplewood Citizens Assn.

Deborah Michaels, Glenbrook Village Homeowners Association

Dennis Yoder for Andy Scott, MDOT

Mohammad Siddique, DPWT

David M. Smith, Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board

Paul Thaler, Locust Hill Citizens Association

Ex-officio:

Ken Reichard (Sen. Ben Cardin)
Joan Kleinman (Rep. Chris Van Hollen)
David “Ollie” Oliveria, NNMC
Jeff Miller, NNMC Transportation Program Manager

Other attendees

Philippe Benzelin
Amy Blackburn, NIH ORF
Max Carroll
Dawn Chaikin
Gerald Cichy, Maryland Transit Administration
Jan Clark, USUHS
Ellen Condon
Richard Drachman
Cyrena Eitler, DOD OEA
Dawn Goldstein
Jenny Haliski
Kristen Hohman
Kristi Kelly, JTF CapMed
Chuck Kines, M-NCPPC
Michelle Mejia, NIH/ORS/DATS
Mal Rivkin
Tom Skilton
Gail Tait-Nouri, DPWT
Stephen Volz
Julie Woepke, MD DBED, OMFA